

*Creator  
Redeemer  
Sustainer*

*who created us out of dust  
who breathed life into us  
who calls us beloved  
In naked vulnerability  
may we arise  
with the dust still on us  
still defining us  
to be  
all that you call us  
and empower us  
to be.*

**LIVING THROUGH LENT**



A colleague posted on social media last year that Lent felt like the Lentiest Lent we'd ever Lented!

Somehow, that is even truer this year, a full year and more into a global pandemic.

The sheer scale of loss and grief, anxiety and despair cannot be over estimated. Like nothing before, the virus that has ravaged the world reminds us of our mortality, of our shared humanity and of our dependence on one another and on the world in which we live.

As we enter a season of reflection, may we know angels sustaining us.

As we follow Christ into the wilderness may we carry with us the grief of the world.

And, as we confront our God, may we know that love walks beside us showing us a different way that is hope for all the world.

Liz Crumlish

**(Some of these reflections have previously been published at: [www.liz-vicarofdibley.blogspot.co.uk](http://www.liz-vicarofdibley.blogspot.co.uk))**

**LENT 2021**

***We don ashes to mark the beginning of Lent  
as we consider life in the wilderness***

***When, by a simple smudge of ashes  
the whole gospel is proclaimed:***

***You are loved,***

***You are deeply loved***

***by the God who loved you before you were born  
whose love accompanies you through all of life  
and whose arms will be there to welcome you in death.***

***Affirming in baptism: You are my beloved child***

***Reaching out through the Eucharist: Remember me***

***Proclaiming in death: Love never ends***

***In all your sojourns in the wilderness of life***

***may you hear those whispers***

***of the God who created you***

***of the God who redeems you***

***And of the God who waits to welcome you to eternal life.***

***Repent and believe in the gospel (Mark 1:15)***



## Ash Wednesday

*Remember that you are dust and to dust you shall return...*

### **Genesis 3:19**

This Ash Wednesday,  
When we cannot gather  
to have ashes imposed.  
When we may not participate  
in the familiar liturgy,  
hearing the words that remind us  
of our mortality  
It becomes all the more important  
to take time, with God,  
reflecting on the nature  
of our shared humanity  
- our relationship  
with one another  
and with the divine creator  
who has placed within us  
wisdom and knowledge  
love and compassion  
connectedness and reliance  
on each other

and on this  
weird and wonderful world  
in which we live  
Perhaps in our forced isolation  
and in our departure  
from normal routine  
in the strangeness of restrictions  
and lockdowns  
closed borders  
and forced quarantine  
and amidst loss  
that continues to mount up  
we might finally confront our frailty  
and consider the question  
of our purpose...  
What is the nature of the footprint  
that we will leave as we journey  
through our life  
How will we carry others



And when will we allow others  
to carry us?  
And how will we bear witness  
to the God of the Universe  
who walks alongside  
bearing us up in infinite love  
providing all that we need  
as we accompany others  
along the road of life

## Thursday 18 February

### Deuteronomy 30:19

**I call heaven and earth today to witness against you: I have set before you life and death, the blessing and the curse. Choose life, then.**

Choosing life  
has never meant so much  
When so many have to fight for every breath  
we who still have choice must choose wisely  
Choose to wear a mask  
Choose to stay apart  
Choose to protect the vulnerable  
Choose to honour the efforts made  
by key workers  
in so many areas of life  
Who ensure that we have food and heat and light  
that our streets are kept clean  
that our loved ones are cared for,  
our children are taught  
our mail is delivered,  
our health care is managed  
and the vaccine remains a beacon of hope  
Choose Life!



Friday 19 February

**Mark 1:9-11**

**In those days Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilee and was baptized by John in the Jordan.**

**And just as he was coming up out of the water, he saw the heavens torn apart and the Spirit descending like a dove on him. And a voice came from heaven, "You are my Son, the Beloved; with you I am well pleased."**

The Spirit always shows up  
And her presence  
is as disruptive today  
as it was  
when Jesus was baptised by John  
Baptised in the face of oppression and despair  
Baptised in the grimness of life  
For Baptism always proclaims the love  
and the mystery of God  
and the presence of the unquenchable Spirit  
Whenever baptism is offered:  
At the beginning of life  
as a symbol  
of hope and promise,



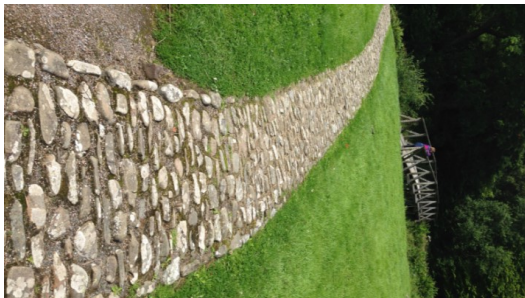
As a rite of passage  
building on family tradition,  
As a response to faith  
that has grown slowly and surely,  
At the bedside of a beautiful 93 year old saint  
embarrassed to admit  
that she had never been baptised,  
Or with parents  
anxious about their newborn's hold on life,  
Whether sprinkled,  
Dunked  
Immersed  
or with the gentlest whisper  
of a touch  
Always, always, always.  
the Holy Spirit  
makes herself known  
as angels gather  
to sing a Gloria  
(Even in Lent)  
declaring the wonder of God  
who calls us Beloved



## Saturday 20 February

**Isaiah 58:9b-12**

***If you remove the yoke from among you,  
the pointing of the finger, the speaking of evil,  
if you offer your food to the hungry  
and satisfy the needs of the afflicted,  
then your light shall rise in the darkness  
and your gloom be like the noonday.  
The Lord will guide you continually,  
and satisfy your needs in parched places,  
and make your bones strong;  
and you shall be like a watered garden,  
like a spring of water,  
whose waters never fail.  
Your ancient ruins shall be rebuilt;  
you shall raise up the foundations of many generations;  
you shall be called the repairer of the breach,  
the restorer of streets to live in.***



When we see our weaknesses caricatured —  
pointing the finger, speaking evil—  
turning aside from those pursuits  
seems obvious and necessary  
But it is not instinctive  
It takes work to throw off the yoke of bitterness  
and disregard for another  
It takes practice to be kind and to live in love  
It takes deep digging for the grace and goodness  
in which we were created to be uncovered  
and released from the depths  
To be repairers and restorers  
requires the inner work  
of self love and compassion  
Yet the act of practising love begins  
with knowing ourselves beloved  
Offering food and drink to another  
arises out of nourishing ourselves  
And providing a foundation on which to build  
demands that we stand firm, unshaken  
Moving beyond survival  
to flourishing in community  
Restorers of life  
together with God

## Sunday 21 February

### Mark 1:12-15

#### The Temptation of Jesus

**And the Spirit immediately drove him out into the wilderness. He was in the wilderness forty days, tempted by Satan; and he was with the wild beasts; and the angels waited on him.**

Driven into the wilderness  
Compelled to follow the Spirit's prompting  
Driven to wrestle with temptation  
and the meaning of life  
Communing with wild beasts  
Waited on by angels  
Newly affirmed by God  
in the waters of baptism.  
and forced to wait on the right time.  
The right time to release the Good News  
and preach repentance.  
The right time to acknowledge  
the Kingdom of God is here.  
May we be driven by the Spirit of God.



## Monday 22 February

*Psalms 104:1-6*

*God the Creator and Provider*

*Bless the Lord, O my soul.*

*O Lord my God, you are very great.*

*You are clothed with honour and majesty,*

*wrapped in light as with a garment.*

*You stretch out the heavens like a tent,*

*you set the beams of your chambers on the waters,*

*you make the clouds your chariot,*

*you ride on the wings of the wind,*

*you make the winds your messengers,*

*fire and flame your ministers.*

*You set the earth on its foundations,*

*so that it shall never be shaken.*

*You cover it with the deep as with a garment;*

*the waters stood above the mountains.*

God invites us to be caught up

in the mystery that is God...

Instead, we spend our time

trying to unravel that mystery

We tie ourselves in knots

instead of enjoying the different kind of knowing

that is offered by God

We distance ourselves

rather than entering into relationship

We ponder how we can change the world  
when God's invitation is simply to dance....

In that dance we discover compassion  
that moves us to care for creation.

In that dance we discover anger  
that fuels us to root out injustice.

And, in that dance  
we discover freedom

made up of Love, Joy, Peace, Patience, Goodness,  
Faithfulness, Gentleness,

the fruits of God-control,  
the elements of the dance  
that sustain the world.

God's laughter and delight  
and tears and compassion  
form the rhythm that draws us in  
and sends us out  
to love life  
and to dance.





## Tuesday 23 February

***Now the serpent was more crafty than any other wild animal that the Lord God had made. He said to the woman, “Did God say, ‘You shall not eat from any tree in the garden?’” The woman said to the serpent, “We may eat of the fruit of the trees in the garden; but God said, ‘You shall not eat of the fruit of the tree that is in the middle of the garden, nor shall you touch it, or you shall die.’ ” But the serpent said to the woman, “You will not die; for God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil.” So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was to be desired to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate; and she also gave some to her husband, who was with her, and he ate. Then the eyes of both were opened, and they knew that they were naked; and they sewed fig leaves together and made loincloths for themselves***

Mother Eve  
who carried within her  
the seed of all humanity  
and the fruit  
of all the earth  
who bore on her shoulders  
the weight of sin  
manifest in the pain  
of broken relationships  
and in constantly having to  
tamp down her wit  
and her enthusiasm  
and her instinctual knowing  
in the fear that she might just  
outshine others.

As she fell  
for the serpent’s smooth talking  
as she bit into the fruit  
as her eyes were opened  
to the wisdom of the gods  
as she shared that wisdom  
with her mate  
did she regret  
even for an instant  
her desire  
to claim the fruit of knowledge  
for her and all her offspring?



Or, like countless sisters  
who followed her  
generation after generation  
did she know  
that a woman’s love  
carries with it  
guilt and shame and blame  
vulnerability and loss  
demanding everything  
promising nothing  
yet choosing to give her all  
for the sake of the world

**Wednesday 24 February**

**Matthew 7:12**

**The Golden Rule**

***“In everything do to others as you would have them do to you; for this is the law and the prophets.***

*Still a startling truth  
The truth that practising love  
is more important  
than all else  
That loving God  
with heart, soul and strength  
must overflow  
into love of neighbour.  
This stark fact  
requires no interpretation  
no explanation  
It requires no tweaking  
It simply is.  
Not easy to live up to  
Demanding.  
But the most important thing  
in all the world.  
Loving God  
Loving neighbour  
When will we get it?*



## Thursday 25 February

**Isaiah 58:6-7**

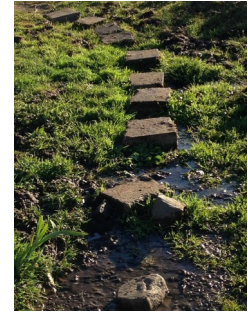
**Is not this the fast that I choose:  
to loose the bonds of injustice,  
to undo the thongs of the yoke,  
to let the oppressed go free,  
and to break every yoke?  
Is it not to share your bread with the hungry,  
and bring the homeless poor into your house;  
when you see the naked, to cover them,  
and not to hide yourself from your own kin?**

The journey into the wilderness  
is not about finding ourselves  
or even seeking the meaning of life  
It is about opening our eyes  
to the world around us  
To see the need of our neighbour  
and of our planet  
Our Lenten journey misses the mark  
when we retreat into piety

and shelter in the Spirit  
instead of stepping out  
tentatively or boldly  
on the path that God treads.

Feeding the hungry,  
welcoming the homeless  
speaking up for the oppressed  
freeing those imprisoned  
by hopelessness and depression.

Those are the tasks  
that make our Lenten journey worthwhile.  
Going into those wilderness spaces  
that folk endure every day  
and seeing the footprints of Christ  
who has travelled this way before us  
and who shows us how to journey  
caring for one another  
sharing love and compassion  
making a difference along the way.  
That is what Lent requires.  
Is not this the fast that God chooses?



Friday 26 February



**Matthew 5:43-48**

**Love Your Enemies**

***"You have heard that it was said, 'You shall love your neighbour and hate your enemy.' But I say to you, Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, so that you may be sons of your Father who is in heaven. For he makes his sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust. For if you love those who love you, what reward do you have? Do not even the tax collectors do the same? And if you greet only your brothers, what more are you doing than others? Do not even the Gentiles do the same? You therefore must be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect.***

You have heard it said...  
Lord, your teaching may simplify the law  
but it does not diminish  
You make it plain  
that what you ask of us  
goes further  
reaches deeper  
demands more  
More love  
More compassion  
More grace  
You teach us  
not just how to get by  
but how to contribute  
to the well-being  
of all creation

You show us  
how to transform the world  
by being more  
So, on those days  
when we are tempted  
to give what comes easy  
Or to simply follow others  
in half hearted gestures  
Preserve us from being judgmental  
and compel us to action  
that stems from the awareness  
that we are shot through  
with your divine spirit  
moulded with infinite love.  
Help us to dig deeper  
so that as you have blessed us

we may bless others  
As you have forgiven us  
we may forgive others  
As you have loved us  
we may love others  
And, when we encounter those  
who make all these things difficult  
give us your heart of compassion  
and your strength of mind  
and root us in your power  
so that we can do no other  
but follow your law of love  
until practice makes perfect  
and grace abounds.

**Saturday 27 February**

***Habakkuk 3:17-19***

***Though the fig tree does not blossom,  
and no fruit is on the vines;  
though the produce of the olive fails,  
and the fields yield no food;  
though the flock is cut off from the fold,  
and there is no herd in the stalls,  
yet I will rejoice in the Lord;  
I will exult in the God of my salvation.  
God, the Lord, is my strength;  
he makes my feet like the feet of a deer,  
and makes me tread upon the heights.***



This is faith:  
To look around  
and see light in the darkness  
To listen carefully  
for sounds of laughter in the tears  
To keep watch  
for signs of hope amidst despair  
To sit with grief  
knowing resurrection is promised

So  
On those days when...  
We can't see the woods  
for the trees  
The clouds obscure the sun  
We can't see God  
through the mist of confusion  
we can't hear God  
for the cacophony around  
This I know

God is present  
in the midst of deafening silence  
God is present  
and emerging from the darkness  
God is present  
when everything else conspires  
to convince us otherwise  
God is present  
And that is enough.

Sunday 28 February Lent 2

Mark 9:2-9

Six days later, Jesus took with him Peter and James and John, and led them up a high mountain apart, by themselves. And he was transfigured before them, and his clothes became dazzling white, such as no one on earth could bleach them.

And there appeared to them Elijah with Moses, who were talking with Jesus.

Then Peter said to Jesus, "Rabbi, it is good for us to be here; let us make three dwellings, one for you, one for Moses, and one for Elijah." He did not know what to say, for they were terrified.

Then a cloud overshadowed them, and from the cloud there came a voice, "This is my Son, the Beloved; listen to him!"

Suddenly when they looked around, they saw no one with them any more, but only Jesus.

As they were coming down the mountain, he ordered them to tell no one about what they had seen, until after the Son of Man had risen from the dead.

*God, when things get weird  
we want to rein it in  
When we're dragged  
beyond our ken  
we scrabble to restore order  
But you just keep on wreaking havoc  
in the order we try to maintain  
until we encounter something  
that's simply beyond us.  
We'll still have a go  
at shoe horning anomalies  
into our ready made moulds  
And we'll exhaust*

*and frustrate ourselves  
in the process  
And you stand back  
not because you don't care  
but because you care deeply  
and you know us so well  
You know that the only way  
we'll turn to you  
is when we have exhausted  
all of our resources  
Then you wait  
to gather us up  
and soothe us*

*You sit with us  
as we grieve our loss of control  
You support us  
as we seek to centre ourselves  
You strengthen us  
as we discover new ways  
to be disciples  
who listen  
to your beloved Son  
God may we be fast learners  
so that we can guide others  
into your light and love this day.*



## Monday 1 March

**Psalms 23:4-6**

**Even though I walk through the darkest valley,  
I fear no evil;**

**for you are with me;  
your rod and your staff—  
they comfort me.**

**You prepare a table before me  
in the presence of my enemies;  
you anoint my head with oil;  
my cup overflows.**

**Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me  
all the days of my life,  
and I shall dwell in the house of the Lord  
my whole life long.**



The God who walks alongside us  
in the darkness  
is the same God  
who anoints our head with oil  
The God present with us  
in the valley  
prepares a table  
and fills our cup to overflowing  
The God who was before us  
and is with us

pursues us  
all the days of life  
As we mourn our familiar  
rhythms of worship  
may we embrace the opportunity  
to experience something new  
and in our stripped back liturgy  
may we encounter the presence of God  
in new and vibrant ways  
May we know ourselves pursued  
by the God  
who meets us in our living rooms  
or in our kitchens  
or in the places we set aside for prayer  
bringing comfort in our fear  
hope in our despair  
and calm in all our striving  
until we know  
the abundance  
of the shepherd  
whose name is Love.

## Tuesday 2 March

*Psalm 22:1,2*

My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?  
Why are you so far from helping me, from the words of my  
groaning? <sup>2</sup>O my God, I cry by day, but you do not answer;  
and by night, but find no rest.

“My God, my God  
why have you forsaken me”  
is not betraying faith  
it is embracing honest humanity  
And until we acknowledge that  
for ourselves  
we withhold permission  
from those we love  
and care for  
to be real and honest  
in their journey of faith.  
The God to whom we cry  
stands with us in our complaint  
for however long it takes  
to express our  
anger, grief and sorrow.



And then the same God  
sits with us  
as we glimpse  
the smallest vestige  
of hope and trust  
crouching beside us  
as we rekindle the embers  
of a tender flame  
walking with us  
as we learn how to be,  
in our woundedness,  
people of faith  
for today.  
We have permission  
to be real.

## Wednesday 3 March

***Luke 19:1-6***

***Jesus and Zacchaeus***

***He entered Jericho and was passing through it. A man was there named Zacchaeus; he was a chief tax collector and was rich. He was trying to see who Jesus was, but on account of the crowd he could not, because he was short in stature. So he ran ahead and climbed a sycamore tree to see him, because he was going to pass that way. When Jesus came to the place, he looked up and said to him, "Zacchaeus, hurry and come down; for I must stay at your house today." So he hurried down and was happy to welcome him.***



Seen

Like Zacchaeus in the sycamore tree

Like the woman at the well

Like the woman caught in adultery

Like the blind man on the road to Jericho

Like the woman who touched the hem of his garment

Like Levi son of Alphaeus sitting by his booth

Like James and John mending their nets

Like Mary sitting by his feet

And Martha busy being host

Like the women at the cross

Like Mary at the tomb

Like the disciples on the Emmaus Road

Some named

Some unnamed

All seen

Seen

Not for their potential

But for their unique created being

Made in the image of God

Seen

by the one who sees beyond

by the one who sees and loves

May you know the wonder

of being seen today

## Thursday 4 March

### 1 Peter 2:4-5

***Come to him, a living stone, though rejected by mortals yet chosen and precious in God's sight, and like living stones, let yourselves be built into a spiritual house, to be a holy priesthood, to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.***

What does it mean  
to be living stones  
when all around  
is loss and death?  
What does it mean  
to be chosen  
and precious  
when inequity  
renders some  
as seemingly dispensable?  
What does it mean  
to be built together  
in the midst of a plague  
when we must stay apart  
when our buildings are closed  
and our liturgies scattered?  
Maybe, just maybe  
the freedom brought  
by being locked out

is the very thing  
that enables  
us to recognise  
the Spirit at work  
all around  
Freed from our attempts  
to fetter her  
Freed from our narrow vision  
of where she might be  
Freed to catch the Spirit  
in our peripheral vision  
as she alights  
where we are  
in hospitals  
and homes  
in funeral parlours  
and makeshift chapels  
In recording studios



and gardens  
in front rooms  
and kitchens  
The Spirit shows up  
without fanfare  
without invocation  
or epiclesis  
She shows up  
Bidden or unbidden  
welcomed or not  
She shows up  
sometimes quietly  
sometimes raging  
always reshaping  
And all we can do  
is try to keep up  
or at least remain vigilant  
to the opportunity  
that she leaves  
in her wake.

## Friday 5 March

Luke 13:31-35

### The Lament over Jerusalem

At that very hour some Pharisees came and said to him, "Get away from here, for Herod wants to kill you." He said to them, "Go and tell that fox for me, 'Listen, I am casting out demons and performing cures today and tomorrow, and on the third day I finish my work. Yet today, tomorrow, and the next day I must be on my way, because it is impossible for a prophet to be killed outside of Jerusalem.' Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the city that kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to it! How often have I desired to gather your children together as a hen gathers her brood under her wings, and you were not willing! See, your house is left to you. And I tell you, you will not see me until the time comes when you say, 'Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord.' "



No slacking for Jesus  
Even with the end in sight  
he took no prisoners  
refused to divert his course  
but ploughed on  
delivering, healing  
accomplishing  
all that he came to do  
before setting his face toward Jerusalem  
the city that lay in wait  
to dispatch him  
as it dispatched others .  
And, even though he had a notion  
of the fate that awaited him there  
Jesus was moved with compassion  
over a city  
and a people  
who had lost their way.  
Compassion that saw beyond his own dire straits  
to go on caring for others.  
**Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord**

**Saturday 6 March**

**Joshua 4:9**

***“However, take care and be earnestly on your guard not to forget the things which your own eyes have seen, nor let them slip from your memory as long as you live, but teach them to your children and to your children’s children.”***

Faith is not ours to keep  
not ours by right  
or default  
or heritage  
Faith  
that elusive  
enigmatic  
mysterious  
bundle of becoming  
is a gift  
to embrace for a time  
(for it doesn't remain static)  
a way to live into  
a hope to which to aspire.  
a series of teachings  
and truths  
and beliefs  
which gather  
unassembled  
and which,

just when it seems to make sense  
just when it seems to have some  
coherence  
or cohesion  
falls apart  
and the pieces  
don't fit together neatly  
ever again  
but in their place  
is a new set of building blocks  
from which to put together  
another semblance  
another portrayal of belief  
with which we can live for a time  
until that, too must be given up  
as more is revealed  
and as the kingdom of God  
emerges  
in the lived out  
grappling with faith

that defies boundaries  
but is evident  
in changed lives  
In changed communities  
and in holding loosely  
even giving away  
what we imagine is ours  
but belongs to God  
and returns to God





## Sunday 7 March Lent 3

**John 2:13-22**

***The Passover of the Jews was near, and Jesus went up to Jerusalem.***

***In the temple he found people selling cattle, sheep, and doves, and the money changers seated at their tables.***

***Making a whip of cords, he drove all of them out of the temple, both the sheep and the cattle. He also poured out the coins of the money changers and overturned their tables.***

***He told those who were selling the doves, "Take these things out of here! Stop making my Father's house a marketplace!"***

What of us today  
who have been driven out  
of our sanctuaries?  
What has become, for us,  
in these days  
our place of prayer?  
Where are we hearing  
voices raised to God  
in praise  
in anguish  
in pleading?  
How are we responding  
to those who cry out to God?  
Where are we practising  
the things that we preach  
in our temples?

How are we making space  
to listen for wisdom  
in the voices of children?  
And where are we seeing  
the clearing out  
of all that hinders  
our turning to God  
to lead us through  
this time of trial?  
Sifting through the carnage  
for something to hold on to  
what will we find?  
What, in the end,  
will lead us into life?



**Monday 8 March**

**Mark 12:32-34**

***Then the scribe said to him, "You are right, Teacher; you have truly said that 'he is one, and besides him there is no other'; and 'to love him with all the heart, and with all the understanding, and with all the strength,' and 'to love one's neighbour as oneself,'—this is much more important than all whole burnt offerings and sacrifices." When Jesus saw that he answered wisely, he said to him, "You are not far from the kingdom of God." After that no one dared to ask him any question.***

This is what love looks like today...

Empty streets

Empty beaches

Notes pushed through letter boxes

offering help

Staying home

so that key workers

can travel to work

Making phone calls

Maintaining

and strengthening

relationships virtually



Meeting online  
finding new ways  
to be creative  
new ways to notice  
and draw attention to  
the love of God  
manifest  
in myriad acts of love.

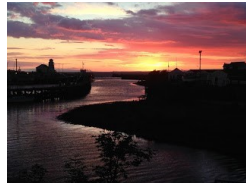
Love is also  
noticing the signs of spring  
that refuse to be shushed  
even through pandemic  
Welcoming the progress  
of the seasons,  
the buds that are awakening  
the blossom bursting forth  
the birdsong that heralds the morning  
the growth that continues regardless  
promising something beyond,  
that awaits our emergence  
from the storm  
and mirrors the growth of love  
worked out in practices  
that transform communities  
as, together, we face our fears  
and weather them in love.  
This is what love looks like  
Pretty much like the Kingdom of God

**Tuesday 9 March**

***Matthew 6:14-15***

***For if you forgive others their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you; but if you do not forgive others, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.***

Holding on to hurts  
and resentments  
carves a channel  
that erodes our wellbeing  
Like a river charting its course  
or a stream burrowing its way  
through a valley  
slowly  
persistently  
making its mark  
leaving a scar  
gradually deepening  
claiming more and more space  
until it becomes  
a part of the landscape  
nigh impossible to reroute  
or diminish  
or change course.



Making the work  
of forgiveness  
all the harder.  
And all the while  
those from whom  
we withhold forgiveness  
retain power over us  
and continue to wound  
perhaps in blissful ignorance  
and almost certainly  
without a care.  
And our hurt is compounded  
and the fire of our resentment  
is stoked and banked up  
by our inability  
our refusal  
to forgive.  
All the more senseless  
when release  
is within our power  
and healing  
is within our reach.  
Forgiveness  
a gift for ourselves.

**Wednesday 10 March**

***Psalm 46:10***

***Desist, and know that I [am] God, I am exalted among nations, I am exalted in the earth.***

(Young's Literal Translation)

Desist  
Stop doing  
Cease  
Abstain  
It goes against the grain to let up  
and notice what  
God is doing.  
To pick up the rhythm of God  
requires that we first  
Desist  
Making space  
Getting out of the way  
in order to enable  
the fresh breeze of God  
(or even the tickle of a breath)



to blow through our structures  
creating life  
allowing love to escape  
and overflow  
into the communities we serve  
Desist  
and know God  
who will be exalted

**Thursday 11 March**

**Hebrews 11:39 - 12:2**

**Yet all these, though they were commended for their faith, did not receive what was promised, since God had provided something better so that they would not, apart from us, be made perfect.**

**Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us also lay aside every weight and the sin that clings so closely, and let us run with perseverance the race that is set before us, looking to Jesus the pioneer and perfecter of our faith, who for the sake of the joy that was set before him endured the cross, disregarding its shame, and has taken his seat at the right hand of the throne of God.**



Not complete  
without one another  
Each of us  
has a part  
and a place  
in the race of life  
Hobblers  
Walkers  
Joggers  
Sprinters  
Runners  
The race waits for us  
to find our pace  
and take our space  
in that great company  
where all are accommodated  
embraced  
enfolded  
welcomed  
and carried along  
by a tidal wave of love  
to where Christ waits  
to greet us  
and to make us whole.

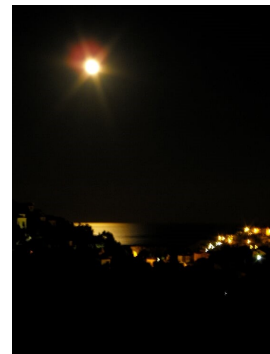
## Friday 12 March

### Psalm 36:5-9

**Your steadfast love, O Lord, extends to the heavens,  
your faithfulness to the clouds.  
Your righteousness is like the mighty mountains,  
your judgments are like the great deep;  
you save humans and animals alike, O Lord.  
How precious is your steadfast love, O God!  
All people may take refuge in the shadow of your wings.  
They feast on the abundance of your house,  
and you give them drink from the river of your delights.  
For with you is the fountain of life;  
in your light we see light.**

Where is the Love  
Where is the Light  
Where is the Faithfulness of God  
whose wings provide refuge  
whose provision sustains life?  
When terror comes  
and evil stalks the earth  
where might justice be found?  
We cry to you, O God  
out of the depths of our fear  
and brokenness.

In a world where children are used  
as pawns in power games  
where presidents pontificate  
and rulers ride roughshod over those  
unable to fight back  
we cry out  
for your justice  
and your compassion  
and your peace  
that binds the broken hearted  
and lifts those weary of suffering  
Gives us eyes to see  
and wisdom to perceive  
how to bring about justice  
how to bring peace  
how to transform our world  
by being transformed  
by the light of your love  
that shines in every darkness.





## Saturday 13 March

### Matthew 21:14-15

**The blind and the lame came to him in the temple, and he cured them. But when the chief priests and the scribes saw the amazing things that he did, and heard the children crying out in the temple, “Hosanna to the Son of David,” they became angry**

There will always be those  
who are suspicious  
of the motives of others  
or threatened  
by their popularity  
Those who cannot see good  
for what it is  
Pure  
Uncomplicated  
Love in action  
And for those  
who practice justice  
and love mercy  
and walk humbly  
the naysayers  
bring danger

and do their best  
to suck the good out of  
all that promises  
wholeness and healing.  
But love had - and has the last word  
Even as he was being crucified  
the King of love cried  
"Father, forgive them"  
And such love  
could not be extinguished  
but triumphed  
over the angry ones.  
Such love.



**Sunday 14 March**

**Matthew 21:9**

**The crowds that went ahead of him and that followed were shouting,**

**“Hosanna to the Son of David!**

**Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord!**

**Hosanna in the highest heaven!”**

Hosanna'  
Lord save us  
cried the children  
mimicking their elders  
Hosanna  
Lord save us  
cried the weary  
pleading for an easier load  
Hosanna  
Lord save us  
cried the women  
longing for compassion  
Hosanna  
Lord save us  
cried the outcasts  
hoping for acceptance

Hosanna  
Lord save us  
cried the disciples  
still confused about their journey  
Who are the folk today crying  
Hosanna  
Lord save us  
Seeking companionship  
on their journey  
compassion and acceptance  
along the way  
a lightening of the load  
and purpose  
for each new day  
Hosanna  
Lord save us  
A cry that awaits  
our response today.



**Monday 15 March**

**Mark 14:32-36**

**Jesus Prays in Gethsemane**

**They went to a place called Gethsemane; and he said to his disciples, "Sit here while I pray." He took with him Peter and James and John, and began to be distressed and agitated. And he said to them, "I am deeply grieved, even to death; remain here, and keep awake." And going a little farther, he threw himself on the ground and prayed that, if it were possible, the hour might pass from him. He said, "Abba, Father, for you all things are possible; remove this cup from me; yet, not what I want, but what you want."**

Being faithful  
is exhausting  
Weighing up the cost  
of commitment  
to change  
when loss seems  
more prevalent than gain  
Balancing the books  
of uncertainty and agitation  
with tentative peace  
Not much of a relief  
but at least a resolution  
around which  
life can begin to flow once more



Like a sandbank in a river  
Still there  
but navigable  
And the energy it takes  
just to get there  
never mind whatever is next  
necessitates withdrawal  
lying low  
taking time  
to reclaim  
all that has been eroded  
in the struggle  
of discernment  
and in the openness  
to possibility.  
Healing  
for that's what is needed  
will creep in slowly  
not to anaesthetise the pain  
but to massage and soothe  
so that tenderness remains  
the foundation  
of future growth  
and continued faithfulness.

Tuesday 16 March

**John 11:21-27, 38-40**

**Martha said to Jesus, "Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died. But even now I know that God will give you whatever you ask of him." Jesus said to her, "Your brother will rise again." Martha said to him, "I know that he will rise again in the resurrection on the last day." Jesus said to her, "I am the resurrection and the life. Those who believe in me, even though they die, will live, and everyone who lives and believes in me will never die. Do you believe this?" She said to him, "Yes, Lord, I believe that you are the Messiah, the Son of God, the one coming into the world." Then Jesus, again greatly disturbed, came to the tomb. It was a cave, and a stone was lying against it. Jesus said, "Take away the stone." Martha, the sister of the dead man, said to him, "Lord, already there is a stench because he has been dead four days." Jesus said to her, "Did I not tell you that if you believed, you would see the glory of God?"**

Martha - one of the first  
proclaimers of faith.

Martha - saw Jesus as the Messiah  
even before she witnessed  
the marvellous resurrection  
of her brother

Martha - often overlooked  
for her great faith  
because of her busyness.

Because, as well as  
a proclaimer of faith  
she was a doer of good works.

Martha, trying to be practical  
Trying to be faithful

Trying, trying, trying...  
to be all things to all people

Mourning her brother  
Caring for her sister

Feeding the mourners who came  
to be with them

Going to meet Jesus  
excusing him for not being there  
and for not having returned sooner  
Trying desperately  
to make everyone feel better

The reconciler

The excuser

The peace maker

Even, at the last,  
giving Jesus a way out:  
"Lord, there is a stench"

And learning  
so powerfully  
that resurrection  
involves pain  
involves stink  
is hard work.  
Resurrection is  
not for the faint hearted!

Wednesday 17 March

**John 8:1-11**

***Early in the morning Jesus came again to the temple. All the people came to him and he sat down and began to teach them. The scribes and the Pharisees brought a woman who had been caught in adultery; and making her stand before all of them, they said to him, "Teacher, this woman was caught in the very act of committing adultery. Now in the law Moses commanded us to stone such women. Now what do you say?" They said this to test him, so that they might have some charge to bring against him. Jesus bent down and wrote with his finger on the ground. When they kept on questioning him, he straightened up and said to them, "Let anyone among you who is without sin be the first to throw a stone at her." And once again he bent down and wrote on the ground. When they heard it, they went away, one by one, beginning with the elders; and Jesus was left alone with the woman standing before him. Jesus straightened up and said to her, "Woman, where are they? Has no one condemned you?" She said, "No one, sir." And Jesus said, "Neither do I condemn you. Go your way, and from now on do not sin again."***

Thrust into his space  
at others' volition  
anticipating only  
Condemnation -  
the only conceivable outcome  
in the eyes of the Scribes and Pharisees  
But not in the alternative kingdom  
which Jesus modelled  
In the space where he taught  
and held folk to account  
to live out Scripture  
He freed the woman caught in adultery  
and freed the Scribes and Pharisees  
from their self righteousness.

He drew a line in the sand  
and then straightened up,  
looked the women in the eye  
and set her free  
from condemnation  
from vulnerability  
From the powerful  
whose power diminished  
in the face of truth  
and integrity  
and compassion.  
In the face of such subversion  
we are called

to lay down our stones  
and to open our hearts  
to be vulnerable  
with the other,  
holding the space  
where power and vulnerability  
can be exchanged  
as one ministers to the other,  
as we give ourselves  
and in the giving  
find healing  
and forgiveness  
and newness of life.



**Thursday 18 March**

**Hosea 4:1**

**Hear the word of the Lord, O people of Israel;  
for the Lord has an indictment against the inhabitants of the  
land.**

**There is no faithfulness or loyalty,  
and no knowledge of God in the land.**

We had one job:  
To care for creation  
The beautiful earth  
and sea and sky  
and all the creatures  
One job  
But we were distracted  
by greed and hunger  
by power and wealth  
We moved on  
from caring for the earth  
to exploiting its resources  
We moved on  
from marveling at nature  
to plundering its power  
We accepted your gifts  
and squandered them  
to suit our complex lifestyles



Lord, as we slowly awaken  
to the havoc we have created  
by our carelessness with the beauty you gave us  
may we use our power  
our wealth and our strength  
to do all that we can  
to change our ways  
and nurture the earth  
as you intended  
Returning to you  
O God of the universe  
Creator of all  
Lover of all  
Sustainer of all



**Friday 19 March**

**Mark 16:15**

**And he said to them, “Go into all the world and proclaim  
the good news to the whole creation.**

Lord, you knew strength of purpose  
A purpose from which  
you refused to waver  
even when confronted  
with all manner of temptation  
and in the face of death itself.  
You knew the things  
that were yours to do.

May we, in these days of confusion  
know your purpose  
your will for our lives.  
May we discern  
what is ours to do  
and glorify you  
by getting on with the tasks  
that you reveal  
are ours  
for this day  
and this hour.



And, amidst all the competing voices  
that call us in so many directions  
may we hear clearly  
and unequivocally  
the voice from heaven  
that assures us  
that you have got this

- that you are God  
and we are not  
and your call to us today  
is to stand firm  
to be still and listen  
and to follow  
wherever you lead  
bringing glory  
to your Name.  
For loves sake.

Saturday 20 March

**Exodus 17:1**

***From the wilderness of Sin the whole congregation of the Israelites journeyed by stages, as the Lord commanded. They camped at Rephidim, but there was no water for the people to drink.***



Journeying by stages  
Learning along the way  
all the lessons  
they did not even know  
they needed.  
Resisting at every turn  
Longing for the safe and the familiar  
- even the slavery and oppression  
preferable over a changed landscape.  
The effort of changing mindsets  
of adapting to a new culture  
deemed too difficult  
too demanding  
requiring more energy  
than they were prepared to expend.

And so the wilderness stretched on  
for generations  
until there was the will  
to embrace the Unknown  
and to follow  
the way of God  
and God's faithfulness  
for every generation.  
Where is your wilderness?  
And what does it mean?  
Is it a place of retreat?  
A place of refuge?  
A place of sanctuary?  
Or is it  
a place of brokenness?

a place of withdrawal?  
a place of despair?  
And in your wilderness  
is there room for healing?  
room for rest?  
room for renewal?  
room for grace to take up residence?  
Thankfully  
Grace  
needs no invitation  
Always surprising us  
just when we need it most  
transforming our wilderness  
into a place of hope,  
preparing the way  
for us to hear  
the cry of God  
Who never leaves us.

**Sunday 21 March Lent 4**

**Psalm 107**

**O give thanks to the LORD, for he is good;  
for his steadfast love endures forever.  
Let the redeemed of the LORD say so,  
those he redeemed from trouble  
and gathered in from the lands,  
from the east and from the west**

Sometimes we need permission  
Permission to put aside  
our Sunday School faith  
and our stoic acceptance that  
“All shall be well  
and all manner of things shall be well”  
Some times we need permission  
to stop downplaying  
our personal grief  
to stop  
“putting things in perspective”  
to refrain from  
“seeing the bigger picture”  
For our losses are cumulative  
The missed events  
of joy and celebration  
or of sorrow and commiseration

The missed hugs  
and company  
the physical distancing  
We know abstinence is vital  
Nonetheless, it hurts  
Loss matters  
It does not deserve to be shaken off  
as unimportant  
or as insignificant  
Loss is loss.  
Our fears are real  
We may believe  
that love will triumph  
but only when we face our fears  
only when we acknowledge our loss  
To cry  
“My God, my God  
why have you forsaken me”  
is not betraying faith  
it is embracing honest humanity  
And until we acknowledge that  
for ourselves  
we withhold permission  
from those we love  
and care for  
to be real and honest  
in their journey of faith.

The God to whom we cry  
stands with us in our complaint  
for however long it takes  
to express our  
anger, grief and sorrow.  
And then the same God  
sits with us  
as we glimpse  
the smallest vestige  
of hope and trust  
crouching beside us  
as we rekindle the embers  
of a tender flame  
and the same God  
walks with us  
as we learn how to be,  
in our woundedness,  
people of faith  
for today.  
We have permission  
to be real.



**Monday 22 March**

**John 11:54-57**

**Jesus therefore no longer walked about openly among the Jews, but went from there to a town called Ephraim in the region near the wilderness; and he remained there with the disciples.**

**Now the Passover of the Jews was near, and many went up from the country to Jerusalem before the Passover to purify themselves. They were looking for Jesus and were asking one another as they stood in the temple, "What do you think? Surely he will not come to the festival, will he?" Now the chief priests and the Pharisees had given orders that anyone who knew where Jesus was should let them know, so that they might arrest him.**

Forced into hiding  
Lord, why didn't you stay there?  
You could have continued your ministry  
underground  
People who needed to would find you  
You could simply have  
slipped off the radar  
of those who sought to harm you.  
The wilderness is a pretty big place  
avoided by many.  
Those who venture there  
are pretty firm of purpose  
Some might say desperate.  
You could have remained elusive  
for the authorities  
who wanted to kill you  
while still available  
to those who needed you.  
But, as ever, your plan  
was much bigger  
than we could ever imagine.  
And it involved you emerging  
from the wilderness,  
facing up to the wrath  
of religious bigots

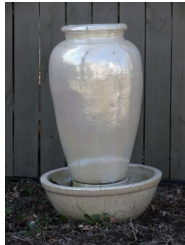
whose teachings you thwarted.  
It involved you emerging  
from the wilderness  
to bring the dazzling light of love  
into the open.  
No  
Yours wasn't a plan  
to be fulfilled quietly.  
It needed the cold light of day  
A high profile  
A public space  
Bringing God's love  
out of the wilderness  
and into glorious light



**Tuesday 23 March**

**Matthew 27:15-23**

**Now at the festival the governor was accustomed to release a prisoner for the crowd, anyone whom they wanted. At that time they had a notorious prisoner, called Jesus Barabbas. So after they had gathered, Pilate said to them, "Whom do you want me to release for you, Jesus Barabbas or Jesus who is called the Messiah?" For he realised that it was out of jealousy that they had handed him over. While he was sitting on the judgment seat, his wife sent word to him, "Have nothing to do with that innocent man, for today I have suffered a great deal because of a dream about him." Now the chief priests and the elders persuaded the crowds to ask for Barabbas and to have Jesus killed. The governor again said to them, "Which of the two do you want me to release for you?" And they said, "Barabbas." Pilate said to them, "Then what should I do with Jesus who is called the Messiah?" All of them said, "Let him be crucified!" Then he asked, "Why, what evil has he done?" But they shouted all the more, "Let him be crucified!"**



A disturbing dream  
A persistent wife  
An indecisive man  
A government that wanted to show strength  
A fickle crowd that wanted blood  
All conspired to a fate sealed  
Crucify him!  
And so Jesus, called the Messiah  
who had haunted the dreams of Pilate's wife  
bought the release of the notorious Barabbas  
and signed his own death warrant.  
How often are we besieged  
by insidious voices  
that come to us unbidden  
and sway us into decisions  
we might not ordinarily have made  
if we had been given time  
to consider the facts  
and not been pressured  
by the clamour and the noise  
into irreversible action?  
"Have nothing to do with that innocent man"  
And so Pilate washed his hands  
and let the crowd decide.  
And a woman's dream  
helped to seal the fate  
of our Lord.

**Wednesday 24 March**

**John 8:48-59**

The Jews answered him, "Are we not right in saying that you are a Samaritan and have a demon?" Jesus answered, "I do not have a demon; but I honour my Father, and you dishonour me. Yet I do not seek my own glory; there is one who seeks it and he is the judge. Very truly, I tell you, whoever keeps my word will never see death." The Jews said to him, "Now we know that you have a demon. Abraham died, and so did the prophets; yet you say, 'Whoever keeps my word will never taste death.' Are you greater than our father Abraham, who died? The prophets also died. Who do you claim to be?" Jesus answered, "If I glorify myself, my glory is nothing. It is my Father who glorifies me, he of whom you say, 'He is our God,' though you do not know him. But I know him; if I would say that I do not know him, I would be a liar like you. But I do know him and I keep his word. Your ancestor Abraham rejoiced that he would see my day; he saw it and was glad." Then the Jews said to him, "You are not yet fifty years old, and have you seen Abraham?" Jesus said to them, "Very truly, I tell you, before Abraham was, I am." So they picked up stones to throw at him, but Jesus hid himself and went out of the temple.

The forces gather  
Authorities conspire  
Time is running out for Jesus  
Accused of being possessed  
Almost stoned for speaking truth  
that folks could not comprehend.  
Forced out of the temple  
and out of the city  
while plots are hatched  
to bring about his death.  
On a crash course  
with saving the world  
And nothing will save him now  
from the cruel death that awaits him

For the kingdom of which he spoke  
was too far outside the realms  
of human imagination.  
Only realised  
by his sacrifice of love.  
Even the brief respite  
of being hailed as a king  
as he enters the city  
to celebrate Passover  
will not turn the tide  
that is set against him.  
And so we wait  
and watch



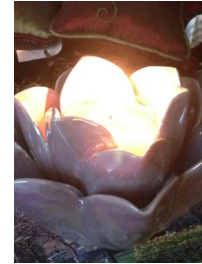
as the story unfolds.  
And still we condone  
persecution of those who are different  
and oppression of those  
who speak truth  
that we don't want to hear today.  
And we wait  
and we watch.

## Thursday 25 March ANNUNCIATION

Luke 1:30-35

The angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favour with God. And now, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you will name him Jesus. He will be great, and will be called the Son of the Most High, and the Lord God will give to him the throne of his ancestor David. He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of his kingdom there will be no end." Mary said to the angel, "How can this be, since I am a virgin?" The angel said to her, "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; therefore the child to be born will be holy; he will be called Son of God.

In the midst of fear  
swamped by powerful emotions  
Mary, who became mother of God  
took courage in both hands  
and offered: Here I am  
Mary acceded, not out of meekness or naïveté  
but in boldness and the fierceness of love  
As we remember the Annunciation  
in the midst of pandemic,  
How might we find courage  
To offer our: Here I am



Offering, not by repressing our fear  
or denying our emotion  
but, in the midst of those  
dredging up a vestige of faith  
Faith that acknowledges  
wherever we are  
whoever we are  
God's invitation to us  
is generous and grace filled:  
to be midwives of God for this day  
In the midst of the trauma in which we live  
may we muster  
Courage  
Boldness  
Grace  
And  
Fierce love  
offering to God: Here I am

**Friday 26 March**

**John 11:38-44**

**Jesus Raises Lazarus to Life**

**Then Jesus, again greatly disturbed, came to the tomb. It was a cave, and a stone was lying against it. Jesus said, "Take away the stone." Martha, the sister of the dead man, said to him, "Lord, already there is a stench because he has been dead four days." Jesus said to her, "Did I not tell you that if you believed, you would see the glory of God?" So they took away the stone. And Jesus looked upward and said, "Father, I thank you for having heard me. I knew that you always hear me, but I have said this for the sake of the crowd standing here, so that they may believe that you sent me." When he had said this, he cried with a loud voice, "Lazarus, come out!" The dead man came out, his hands and feet bound with strips of cloth, and his face wrapped in a cloth. Jesus said to them, "Unbind him, and let him go."**



Coming out  
Not an end -  
there is still a great unravelling  
to be encountered  
Unravelling that can only be completed  
in stages  
Alone and in community  
Nor is it a beginning -  
All that has gone before remains  
craving attention  
imploring sifting  
demanding confrontation  
Neither an ending  
nor a beginning  
but a stage  
on the road to healing  
And the miracle in healing  
is the capacity  
the temerity  
and the resilience  
to examine the past  
to greet the future  
and to stay well in the present.  
Coming out  
one stage  
on the road to wholeness.



**Saturday 27 March**

**John 8:20**

**He spoke these words while he was teaching in the treasury  
of the temple, but no one arrested him, because his hour had  
not yet come.**

His hour had not yet come  
But the forces were gathering  
His hour had not yet come  
But his fate was pretty much sealed  
His hour had not yet come  
But the damage had been done  
His hour had not yet come  
But his plain speaking  
and subversive action  
had riled enough of the powerful  
They would not hold off much longer  
before they would attempt  
to extinguish  
The Light of the World.  
But  
His hour had not yet come.



And so, for a while yet  
he would continue  
by his love in action  
and by his  
living in the margins  
to noise up  
those in authority  
the religious zealots  
and the occupying forces  
until they were forced to act  
aiding and abetting one another  
united in their desire  
to snuff out  
the peacemaker  
who cared for the poor.  
His hour had not yet come.

## **Palm Sunday**

**Mark 11:7-9**

**Then they brought the colt to Jesus and threw their cloaks on it; and he sat on it.**

**Many people spread their cloaks on the road, and others spread leafy branches that they had cut in the fields.**

**Then those who went ahead and those who followed were shouting, "Hosanna! Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord!"**



This is the time to work out  
who we are  
without a crowd.

We, who are so fickle  
often drawn in by popular opinion  
often dragged along for the ride  
have a unique opportunity  
to question who we are  
and what we believe.

In our enforced isolation  
will we still cry out  
Hosanna!

Lord save us!

And will religious leaders today  
have any more clue  
about the needs of the people?  
Or will we keep on colluding  
with political forces  
that go with the flow  
to save the economy?

This Palm Sunday  
away from the crowd,  
whose name is on your lips  
and whose creed  
is written on your heart?

Blessed is the One who comes in the name of the Lord.  
Hosanna!

**Mark 11:11**

**Then he entered Jerusalem and went into the temple; and  
when he had looked around at everything, as it was already  
late, he went out to Bethany with the twelve.**

It started with the search for a colt  
a fools errand for the disciples  
It ended with a parade  
a clown's procession for the common people.  
For Jesus used that colt  
to laugh in the face of the authorities  
taunting them  
flexing his muscles of influence and popularity.  
He really should have been keeping a low profile.  
But, throwing caution to the wind,  
he took himself into the city  
and, enjoying, momentarily, the protection of the crowd  
he pushed his enemies over the edge.  
And he knew it.  
He looked around, saw it was late, and left.



Late on so many levels.  
Late in the day.  
Late in the journey.  
Too late for him.  
His boats were now burned  
and the salvaged timber already fashioned  
into a cross.  
A simple request: Find me a colt  
set in motion  
a whole series  
of truths and dares  
of arrest and trial  
of betrayal  
and denial.  
His fate was sealed  
and so was our redemption  
as palms dissolve into passion.  
A fool's errand indeed!

## Monday of Holy Week

### John 12:3

**Mary took a pound of costly perfume made of pure nard, anointed Jesus' feet, and wiped them with her hair. The house was filled with the fragrance of the perfume.**

It's all about her  
A woman filled with love  
driven to extravagance  
bursting to show  
how madly, deeply  
she loved.  
A woman who acted on impulse,  
threw caution to the wind,  
risked everything  
gave way beyond her means.  
A woman who managed to break free  
of the taboos  
and cautions imposed on her  
by her patriarchal culture  
just for a moment  
because the moment  
was simply too special to miss.

And, as is often the way  
as the story is told  
and retold,  
the focus shifts  
from a daring  
courageous  
inspiring woman.  
And the story becomes, instead,  
about the men around her.  
Their discomfort fills the space  
instead of the fragrance  
of the perfume.  
And we are diverted  
to a whole other story  
that's all about the men.  
Another hidden woman  
in a story edited by men.  
May we allow her story  
to emerge from history.



## Tuesday of Holy Week

### Philippians 2:5-8

Let the same mind be in you that was in Christ Jesus, who, though he was in the form of God, did not regard equality with God as something to be exploited, but emptied himself, taking the form of a slave, being born in human likeness. And being found in human form, he humbled himself and became obedient to the point of death-- even death on a cross.



### **Bread** of life

Broken, torn, shared

Equipping

Nourishing

Sustaining

### **Cup** of salvation

Poured, supped, ingested

Flowing

Quenching

Freeing

### **Bread and cup**

Filling

Releasing

Making new

Replenishing the body

Infusing all of life

with sacred meaning

and connectedness

Blurring the lines

Uniting heaven and earth

Past, present and eternity

in a great cloud of witnesses

Overflowing

out of our sanctuaries

onto the streets

marking time

until all can be fed again

with the life of the world.

Maranatha!

## Wednesday of Holy Week

### Matthew 26:36-41

Then Jesus went with them to a place called Gethsemane; and he said to his disciples, "Sit here while I go over there and pray." He took with him Peter and the two sons of Zebedee, and began to be grieved and agitated. Then he said to them, "I am deeply grieved, even to death; remain here, and stay awake with me." And going a little farther, he threw himself on the ground and prayed, "My Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from me; yet not what I want but what you want." Then he came to the disciples and found them sleeping; and he said to Peter, "So, could you not stay awake with me one hour? Stay awake and pray that you may not come into the time of trial; the spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak."

Lord, when you were troubled  
you took your friends  
to keep watch with you.  
You needed them close  
Not for their scintillating conversation  
Not even for their innate wisdom  
You wanted them  
for basic human companionship  
So, even though they slept  
Even though they couldn't comprehend  
the depth of your suffering,



their nearness was enough.  
Today, when our lives are disrupted,  
when we cannot be physically present  
with those we need and love  
show us how to support one another  
Awaken in us  
a new spirit of connection  
that drills deep  
that goes beyond what we can see  
to the agony that lies beneath  
And in this season,  
when we linger with you  
in the garden  
may our Gethsemane  
our place of refuge  
forge in us the resolve  
to deepen and sustain  
the connections that we need  
to see us through  
this time of trial.

## Maundy Thursday

**John 13:12-15**

**After he had washed their feet, had put on his robe, and had returned to the table, he said to them, “Do you know what I have done to you? You call me Teacher and Lord—and you are right, for that is what I am. So if I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another’s feet. For I have set you an example, that you also should do as I have done to you.**

The foot washing we mimic  
in our pimped up sanctuaries  
on Maundy Thursday  
with our tepid water  
and pristine white fluffy towels  
will never get close  
to the ritual played out  
by Jesus  
who handled the feet  
of grown men  
who had just traversed  
the gutters and cesspools  
of Jerusalem  
at festival time.

Our notions of servanthood  
can barely compute  
the magnitude  
of the teacher  
stooping,  
kneeling  
bathing  
caressing  
the soles  
of his disciples.

But today  
all over the world  
we are witnessing  
such magnitude  
of selfless giving  
in our frontline workers  
who are risking all  
to care for  
the ill  
and the dying.  
Today, at every turn,  
we are being confronted  
with tangible reminders  
of what servanthood looks like  
and of the cost of love.

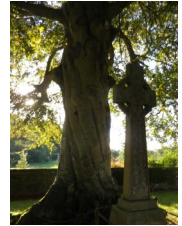


As we bear witness to  
an extravaganza  
of costly love  
May we not look away  
but, rather, observe  
and stand in awe  
of the servants  
who are teaching us today  
about stepping up  
and stepping out  
to love  
and to serve.  
And may we never forget  
our debt of gratitude  
for their acts of servant love.

## Good Friday

John 19:30

**When Jesus had received the wine, he said, "It is finished." Then he bowed his head and gave up his spirit.**



It is finished  
For too many across the world  
this cry echoes  
It is finished  
It echoes  
as a virus that respects none  
robs them of the breath of life  
It echoes  
in refugee camps  
and in luxury resorts  
in urban slums  
and in parliaments  
in deserted cities  
and in rural villages  
in homes  
in hospitals  
in care facilities

It is finished  
And the brutal execution  
of a political prisoner  
suddenly doesn't seem so fanciful  
so at odds with reality  
when the whole world is united  
in resisting a common enemy  
It is finished  
is not the end  
for all who have died  
and for all who mourn  
Our collective grief  
will continue to shape  
our lives  
and the life of the world  
for all time  
A cross shaped grief  
into which is gathered  
our pain  
our vulnerability  
our helplessness

our loss  
our community  
our humanity  
Gathered up in that cry  
It is finished  
As we wrestle  
with what it means  
to be human beings  
connected across the globe  
dependant on each  
playing their part  
dependant on our fragile ecology  
dependant  
on being human  
together  
dependant on love  
that excludes none  
and encompasses all.  
How can we ensure that  
It is finished  
is only the beginning?



## Holy Saturday

**Matthew 27:57-61**

### **The Burial of Jesus**

**When it was evening, there came a rich man from Arimathea, named Joseph, who was also a disciple of Jesus. He went to Pilate and asked for the body of Jesus; then Pilate ordered it to be given to him. So Joseph took the body and wrapped it in a clean linen cloth and laid it in his own new tomb, which he had hewn in the rock. He then rolled a great stone to the door of the tomb and went away. Mary Magdalene and the other Mary were there, sitting opposite the tomb.**

So that's it  
After all the kerfuffle  
all the hype  
that's what it came down to  
A broken body  
buried in a stone cold tomb  
And two women  
sitting waiting  
No more to be said  
No more to be done  
Sabbath  
And yet...  
And yet...



there is beauty  
and sacrament  
in the waiting  
Waiting  
with the sorrow  
Waiting  
with the soul crushing pain  
Waiting  
with the ache in the chest  
that was forged  
in love  
shattered, messy love  
that knows no logic  
that cannot be bound  
The kind of love  
that we wouldn't be without  
though it causes such pain  
Two women  
Mary Magdalene  
and  
the other Mary  
kept their vigil.  
In the searing hurt  
of loss and love  
they waited.  
As must we.

## Easter Day

### Mark 16:1-8

When the sabbath was over, Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James, and Salome bought spices, so that they might go and anoint him.

And very early on the first day of the week, when the sun had risen, they went to the tomb.

They had been saying to one another, "Who will roll away the stone for us from the entrance to the tomb?"

When they looked up, they saw that the stone, which was very large, had already been rolled back.

As they entered the tomb, they saw a young man, dressed in a white robe, sitting on the right side; and they were alarmed.

But he said to them, "Do not be alarmed; you are looking for Jesus of Nazareth, who was crucified. He has been raised; he is not here. Look, there is the place they laid him.

But go, tell his disciples and Peter that he is going ahead of you to Galilee; there you will see him, just as he told you.

That first Easter  
came without fanfare  
in the midst of brutal occupation  
in the midst of recession and oppression  
It snuck in  
And the first to observe it  
were those who were up and about early  
The women who kept vigil  
The news was whispered  
from graveyard to village  
from village to town  
picking up speed  
gathering momentum  
until

in all its gobsmacking glory  
the reality of resurrection  
was realised.  
And light dawned  
not in one stupendous burst  
but slowly  
and gently  
dispelling darkness nonetheless.  
This Easter  
Resurrection will still come  
Heralded by angels:  
Key workers on their way to early shifts  
Or heading home after a night shift

And the good news will be gossiped  
by those who keep vigil today  
We do not need to gather in person  
Even in the distancing  
we bear witness  
to the light of Christ  
that shines in the darkness  
and is not overcome  
Love is not defeated.  
this we believe  
Christ will still rise  
The darkness will not last forever  
Light will surely dawn.  
He is Risen—He is Risen indeed!

And so it continues...

***Luke 24:45-49***

***Then he opened their minds to understand the scriptures, and he said to them, "Thus it is written, that the Messiah is to suffer and to rise from the dead on the third day, and that repentance and forgiveness of sins is to be proclaimed in his name to all nations, beginning from Jerusalem. You are witnesses of these things. And see, I am sending upon you what my Father promised; so stay here in the city until you have been clothed with power from on high."***



This Easter Lord Jesus  
you walk with us  
not on the road to Emmaus  
but through every emotion  
and question  
and cry of despair  
You listen without dismissal  
carefully holding  
all that we share.  
This Easter, Lord Jesus  
we recognise you  
not in breaking of bread in our sanctuaries  
but at every table  
where families gather  
forced together  
or kept apart  
and in every means we have  
of maintaining relationships  
and of staying connected  
You continue to surprise us  
Risen Lord  
Turning up when we least expect you  
in places we would never imagine  
May the light of resurrection  
Pierce the darkness in us  
and in our world today.

**Luke 24:30-35**

*When he was at the table with them, he took bread, blessed and broke it, and gave it to them. Then their eyes were opened, and they recognized him; and he vanished from their sight. They said to each other, "Were not our hearts burning within us while he was talking to us on the road, while he was opening the scriptures to us?" That same hour they got up and returned to Jerusalem; and they found the eleven and their companions gathered together. They were saying, "The Lord has risen indeed, and he has appeared to Simon!" Then they told what had happened on the road, and how he had been made known to them in the breaking of the bread.*

*On the road the Risen Christ  
broke open the scriptures  
and made the hearts of the disciples  
burn within  
At table the Risen Christ  
broke and blessed bread  
and propelled the feet of the disciples  
to go and feed others  
The word  
Always convicting  
The bread of life  
Always compelling  
Until it's not  
When our hunger cannot be fed  
and our thirst cannot be quenched  
When we cannot  
taste and see  
that the Lord is good  
how then shall we be nourished?*

*How then will we be sent?  
In our pandemic fasting  
what is it  
that causes us to recognise  
the Risen Christ  
in the midst of all our questions  
making our hearts burn  
and in the ordinary things  
making himself known  
still sending us  
still compelling us  
as much as ever  
to believe in Resurrection  
and to share hope  
and joy  
with others?*

*May our sacramental hunger  
sharpen our senses  
to all the other ways  
that the Risen Christ is present  
and amplify our awareness  
of how we might serve  
and be served  
in the life of the world  
where hunger is real  
and where we are called  
beyond our altars  
to know Christ  
in the brokenness  
of the world.*